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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



**Latin American Cultural Resiliency to External Foreign Policy:
Strategic Implications for the United States as China Extends Into
Latin America**

by

Benito J. Barron

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Air Force

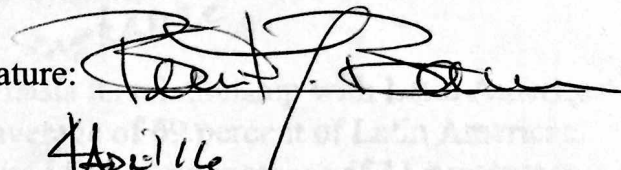
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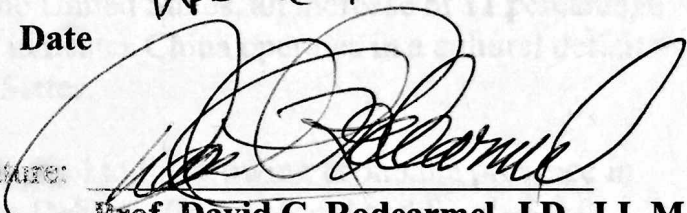
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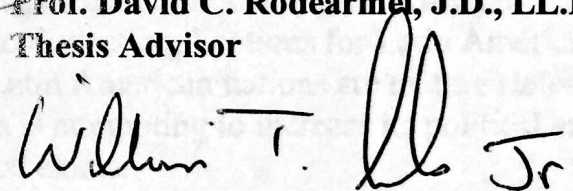
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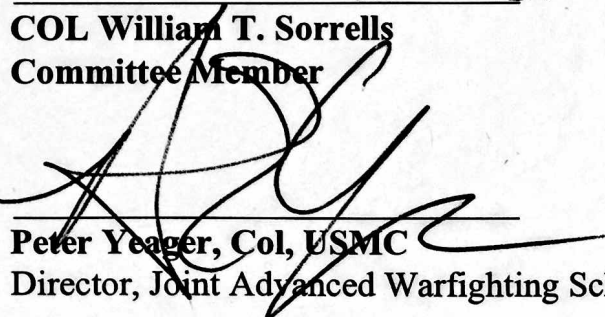
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Abstract

China's meteoric rise has captured the attention of the United States. Adding to the complexity is China has successfully made inroads in Latin America. This reality has strategists and policy-makers at odds with one-another with respect to formulating a policy for addressing the growth of Chinese influence in Latin America. The concern is whether the rise of China and its increasing presence in Latin America signals a challenge to the influence of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. This document discusses the pragmatic approach Latin American nations are exploring with respect to Chinese influence in the region as its cultural resiliency ensures the United States will maintain its regional dominance.

Now is the time for the United States to emphasize its relationship with Latin America. According to a 2013 Latinobarómetro poll, an average of 69 percent of Latin American respondents have a favorable opinion of the United States, an increase of 11 percentage points from 2008. Ethnographic research indicates China operates in a cultural deficit that becomes advantageous to the United States.

Chinese political influence is part-and-parcel to the growing economic presence in Latin America. This paper utilizes Monica Dehart's China Model and South-South cooperation approach as organizing principles to dissect implications for Latin America. The research has netted an understanding that Latin American nations are mature states seeking their own political agendas while China is attempting to increase its political and economic influence by closing a cultural gap that exists.

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Dedication

Consistently, this portion of any major literary project is reserved for family and friends who sacrificed their time so the work could be completed. This is for good reason. My wife, Stephanie, endured my terrible mood swings as I struggled to complete this thesis. Stephanie, along with our daughters Mia, Isabella, and Sofia, continue to be my inspiration. Truly, it is only through their sacrifice that I was able to complete this thesis. For that, I am forever indebted.

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I am grateful that the moon and stars aligned such that I was blessed to be a part of Seminar 2 for the Academic Year 2015-2016 JAWS class. The personalities, experiences, and willingness to assist have netted me an enriching academic environment; and, more importantly, life-long friendships. Additionally, the guidance Professor Rodearmel provided throughout this adventure is much appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge COL Bill Sorrells for not only his interest in this project but also taking personal interest in my academic adventure and career. Lastly, the staff at the Ike Skelton Library are force enablers. Their ability to help with research was invaluable. In particular, Ms Dawn Joines was vital to this project.

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Introduction

China's meteoric rise has captured the attention of the United States particularly as China makes inroads in Latin America. The geopolitical situation is confusing as trust and confidence between nations continues to ebb and flow globally. This reality has strategists and policy-makers at odds with one-another with respect to formulating a policy in addressing the growth of Chinese influence in Latin America.

The concern is whether the rise of China signals a challenge to the influence of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. The United States has been the dominant economic, political, and military power in Latin America "since President James Monroe's 1823 declaration that European powers must respect the western hemisphere as the U.S. sphere of influence."¹ Although Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union have challenged this declaration in the past, only China has experienced the level of economic success in Latin America that has led to a "reshaping" of politics in the region.² This "reshaping" is the area of concern.

The Chinese political influence is part-and-parcel to the growing economic presence in Latin America. China's economic trading with Latin America has increased steadily, especially since 2000. As such, China is second only to the United States in trading with Latin America (see Figure 1).³ Additionally, foreign direct investment has expanded since 2006 (see Figure 2). This investment has primarily been in natural resource extraction making China the third largest investor in the region behind the

¹ Isabel Hilton, "China in Latin America: Hegemonic Challenge?" *Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Center* (2013): 1.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ Hongying Wang, "The Missing Link in Sino-Latin American Relations," *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 24, No. 95 (September 2015): 923, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1013380> (accessed October 3, 2015).

United States and the Netherlands.

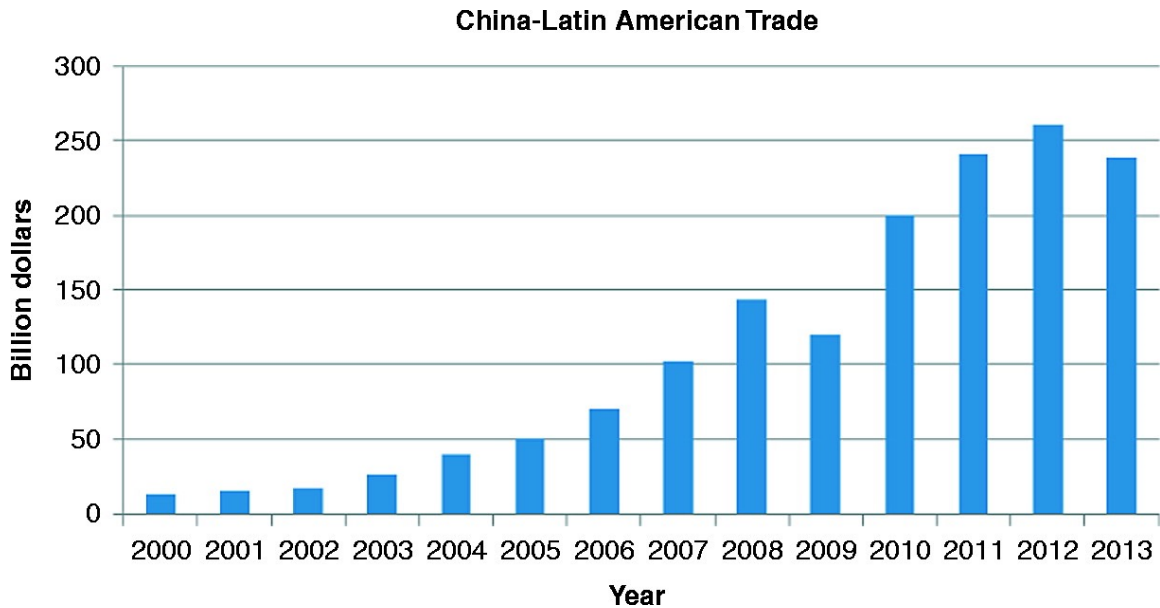


Figure 1. China–Latin American trade.⁴

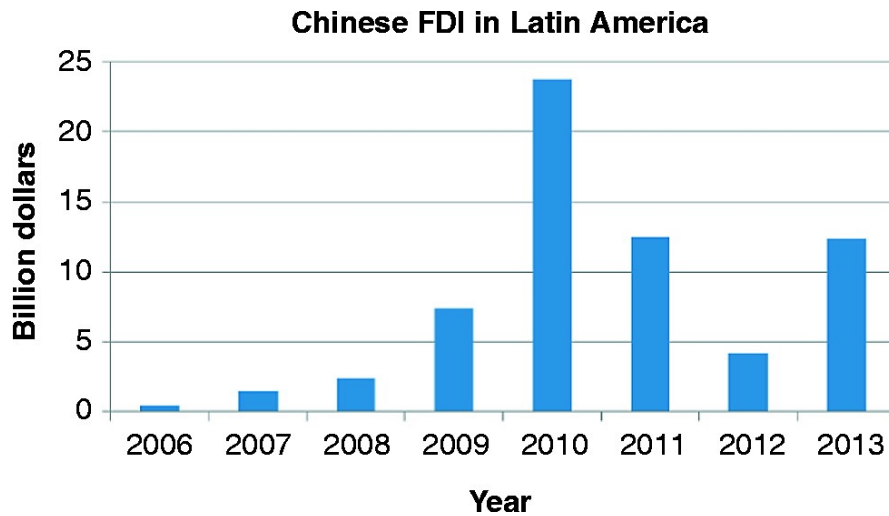


Figure 2. Chinese direct investment in Latin America.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 923. Note: Data is from Hongying Wang's compilation of statistics from Chinese Customs, Ministry of Commerce and various government statements.

⁵ Ibid., 924. Note: Hongying Wang Calculated using data from The Heritage Foundation, China Global Investment Tracker, available at: <http://www.heritage.org/research/projects/china-global-investment-tracker-interactive-map>.

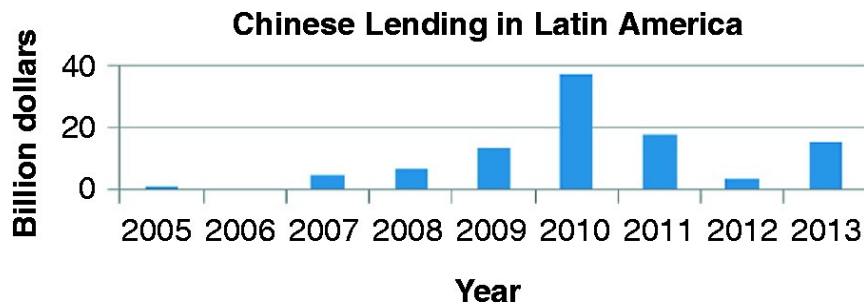


Figure 3. Chinese lending in Latin America.⁶

Further depicting China’s economic prowess in Latin America, Figure 3 shows the tremendous amount of money Chinese policy banks and commercial banks have loaned to Latin America. “In 2010, China’s loan commitment to the region was greater than the loan commitments provided by the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, and United States Export-Import Bank combined for that year.”⁷ Furthermore, China has signed free trade agreements with Chile, Peru, and Costa Rica and has proposed the same for Mercosur (Common Market of the South)—consisting of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela.⁸

The expanding economic linkage between China and Latin America is undeniable. This bond has placed the United States in a quandary as it attempts to decipher China’s intent. Publicly, China leans on its “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”, defined as mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-aggression; non-interference; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.⁹ However, realists doubt a peaceful rise is China’s intent.

⁶ Ibid., 924. Note: Hongying Wang calculated using data from Inter-American Dialogue, available at http://www.thedialogue.org/map_list.

⁷ Ibid., 924.

⁸ Ibid., 925.

⁹ C. Fred Bergsten, et al., “China Balance Sheet,” Chinese Foreign Policy, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/080916_cbs_1_foreignpolicyf.pdf (accessed September 10, 2015).

John Mearsheimer has posited that China's rapid economic growth and global reach is the greatest concern for the United States in the twenty-first century. His realist perspective contends that China will undermine the existing international order by using its economic clout for increased political influence.¹⁰ In "War and Change in World Politics," Robert Gilpin further contextualizes the dilemma. He states, "(a)s its relative power increases, a rising state attempts to change the rules governing the international system, the division of the spheres of influence, and most important of all, the international distribution of territory."¹¹ In this case, the sphere of influence leads to a perceived "battle for Latin America's soul."¹² The issue at hand is whether a truly realist, bordering on alarmist, view is applicable to the dilemma. That is, if followed to its logical conclusion, a realist would contend, "(i)n response, the dominant power counters this challenge through changes in its policies that attempt to restore equilibrium in the system. The historical record reveals that if it fails in this attempt, the disequilibrium will be resolved by war."¹³

As the world is a human-led system of complexities, this view is not without its merits. During the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union used Latin America as an ideological battleground via proxy wars as the Soviets attempted to assert its national interests. Logically, the U.S. and China would enter into a similar encounter, however, in the discussions policy makers often miss the intricacies the battleground

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 400.

¹¹ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1981.), 187.

¹² Michael Reid, *Forgotten Continent: The Battle for Latin America's Soul*: (Yale University Press, 2009), xiv.

¹³ Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, 187.

itself possesses. To that end, Latin America is not simply a chess piece to be utilized by the larger nations. She has her own pursuit of interests and dynamic culture.

As Howard Wiarda has so aptly stated, “(c)ulture...is the great but usually undiscussed issue of international politics and foreign policy.”¹⁴ As Latin American nations seek to net the level of economic success China currently enjoys, there will be a natural gravitation towards a partnership. Although frightening for some U.S. policy makers, the U.S. is not poised to be supplanted as the regional powerhouse because of cultural differences that become problematic for China to overcome. This document discusses the pragmatic approach Latin American nations are exploring with respect to Chinese influence in the region as cultural resiliency ensures the United States will maintain its regional dominance. Additionally, the conclusion of the thesis will propose U.S. foreign policy recommendations based on cultural similarities.

¹⁴ Howard J. Wiarda 1939-, *Culture and Foreign Policy : The Neglected Factor in International Relations* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub., 2013.), xii.

China Model Versus South-South Cooperation As Organizing Principles

Using Barbara Stallings' terminology, the U.S-China-Latin America triangle is viewed through many lenses.¹ For the purposes of this paper, Monica Dehart's China Model and South-South cooperation will be utilized as organizing principles to dissect implications for two Latin American nations—Costa Rica and Mexico. As such, it is imperative to define these concepts as it pertains to Dehart's approach.

The China Model describes “not only the combination of authoritarian politics and free market economics that have defined China's own development process, but also the global implications of these policies—especially in terms of a threat to the liberal world order.”² As a counter-narrative, especially to negate any perceived threat, China instead offers “South-South cooperation to describe its goal of a harmonious world order based on nation-state sovereignty and partnerships with mutual benefits.”³ Dehart's analysis engages the China Model and South–South cooperation knowing that each term allows for a polarized view to the same issue. In addition, through an ethnographic viewpoint, the debate is grounded in a cultural framework. Therefore, the following three concepts will be the basis for analysis.⁴

First, the China Model and South-South cooperation concepts cannot solely be dismissed as ideologies as Latin America has experienced a degree of global development. For example,

¹ Roett, Riordan,,Paz, Guadalupe,, "China's Expansion into the Western Hemisphere Implications for Latin America and the United States," Brookings Institution Press, 239.

² Monica DeHart, "Remodelling the Global Development Landscape: The China Model and South–South Cooperation in Latin America," *Third World Quarterly* 33, no. 7 (August 2012): 1360, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=77508969&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed September 16, 2015).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

China played a major role in the commodities boom both in “hard” commodities such as minerals and in “soft” commodities such as monocropped agriculture and livestock in various Latin American countries; its demand for commodities has increased on a scale unlike that of any nation in modern history. During the boom, respectable rates of economic growth were experienced across South America. The average annual rate of real per capita income growth was 4.1 percent from 2003 through 2011—including the crisis years 2008 and 2009. Thus, South America experienced an impressive 78 percent improvement in the average annual per capita income growth rate from that attained during the period 1990-2002 (which was 2.3 percent).⁵

Rather, the conversation needs to dissect the perception. In this case, China and Latin America pragmatically position themselves in the geopolitical arena despite the labels. It is equally as important to analyze how the United States perceives the Sino-Latin American relationship. “By approaching the meaning of the China Model and South–South cooperation from this perspective...development values, relations, and identities are visible.”⁶

Second, the analysis will determine the common assumptions about development relations the China Model and South-South share. Likely, “Western critiques and China’s own self-representations converge in their representation of China as both a powerful new development donor and a mere developing nation peer. This convergence matters, as it is ultimately China’s dual development identity that makes it such a powerful threat or potent promise to different development practitioners and political observers.”⁷

⁵ James M. Cypher, Tamar Diana Wilson, “China and Latin America: Processes and Paradoxes” *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (November 2015): 6, <http://ejournals.ebsco.com/direct.asp?ArticleID=49A8AA80B3A6F7412B33> (accessed December 30, 2015).

⁶ DeHart, *Remodelling the Global Development Landscape: The China Model and South–South Cooperation in Latin America*, 1360.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1361.

The two previously mentioned analytical steps lay the foundation for the cultural discourse that is truly the problematic crux for China. The third step explores the implications of China's engagement as it manifests in an "intransigence of First-Third World hierarchies and perceptions of essenti(al) cultural difference, in spite of the rise of new development actors and models from the global South."

In the following section, DeHart applies the methodology to Costa Rica by interweaving the China Model and South-South concepts with ethnographic research.⁸ The approach "illustrates how these concepts play out in practice, often with contradictory effects."⁹ The contradiction is expected, but commonalities within the analysis is the goal. As such, the Costa Rica example establishes the pattern by which the Mexico case study is conducted to establish a cultural architecture by way of a summary of results at the conclusion of the case studies.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a unique case study as it is, arguably, the most successful democratic nation in Latin America. It became an anomaly in 2007 when it switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China. Costa Rica's recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC) surprised audiences in the domestic and international arena. Despite any dismay, the reality is "the action was consistent with the pragmatism and international orientation of President Arias and with his goal of expanding Costa Rica's engagement with the international community."¹ This pragmatism is the departure point for the China Model and South-South cooperation analysis.

China Model

Based on a challenge to the Chinese professed "peaceful rise", Chinese officials have sought to put many of the China Model assumptions to rest in its relationship with Costa Rica. DeHart interviewed a Chinese embassy official who stated:

Every country is different, so it has to search for the path that is right for itself . . . We haven't exported our experience, because that's not good . . . We don't impose our ideology on other countries. For example, [Hugo] Chavez has formulated '21st Century socialism', but that socialism is different from socialism with Chinese characteristics. They are two different models/paths because China is a very complicated country with thousands of years of history and its own culture.²

Architects of the China–Costa Rica relationship did not perceive China's policies as antithetical to Costa Rica's liberal traditions; rather, an opportunity to further domestic development pragmatically by aligning itself with an economic powerhouse. "Costa Rica, like other Latin American nations, has spent the last three decades pursuing

¹ Robert Evan Ellis, *China in Latin America: The Whats and Wherefores* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2009), 215.

² DeHart, *Remodelling the Global Development Landscape: The China Model and South–South Cooperation in Latin America*, 1364.

modernization through greater market integration, export-led growth, regional free trade, the privatization of public goods, and a democratic order dedicated to protecting individual rights.”³

When former Costa Rican president Oscar Arias was interviewed about the ideological contradiction that PRC recognition signifies, he responded with: “These considerations, that China has a totalitarian government, that there is no individual freedom, that it doesn’t respect human rights like we do in the West, are considerations that in its moment, the United States, France, Germany ... everyone had to consider.”⁴ In his calculus, normalizing relations with China was not a departure from the liberal views Costa Rica embraces, but a natural progression in furthering their development. As Arias further expressed, if the United States could forge ties with China, then why shouldn’t Costa Rica?⁵

Regardless of the Costa Ricans ability to set aside ideological differences, the China Model does represent a platform for Latin American critics. The China Model naysayers are quick to point out the very tangible negatives the Chinese way of business delivers. The China Model has come to represent what detractors see as a “‘resource-hungry’ China pursuing environmentally destructive, extractive industries that will ultimately limit, rather than support, the region’s development.”⁶ To further illuminate the view of the China Model detractors, Chinese domestic ethics are brought to bear, mainly defined as “cheap labor and materials, exploitative work practices, and disregard

³ Ibid., 1365.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 1366.

for the environment.”⁷ To exemplify this point, one need not look any further than the construction of Costa Rica’s new stadium in its capital city of San Jose.

In response to the 2007 switch in recognition from Taipei to Beijing, the PRC rewarded Costa Rica with a “new \$90 million sports stadium and purchas(ed) \$300 million of its government bonds.”⁸ If perception is a measure of success or failure, this agreement had a miscalculated negative effect as Costa Ricans quickly condemned the Arias government as it was seen as betrayal of their democratic values. “In addition to that, the President’s popularity plummeted and the large reservoir of soft power accumulated over the years dissipated in a few days. The president defied the national consensus and thus lost the respect of a large part of the population.”⁹

The Chinese government awarded the project to a Chinese construction firm who brought to Costa Rica over 700 Chinese workers along with all the materials and equipment necessary. “Chinese workers labored on eight-hour shifts, often in two to three shift rounds, so that work continued 24 hours a day to meet the 24-month production deadline.”¹⁰

Critics of the China Model view the above example as indicative of the exploitive nature of China’s approach. That is, critics contend that this production method

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ R. E. Ellis, "Costa Rica at a Crossroads in Courtship with Beijing," *China Brief* Vol. 14, No. 10 (May 23, 2014): 10, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=97173984&site=eds-live&scope=site> (accessed February 14, 2016).

⁹ Otto F. 1. von Feigenblatt, "Costa Rica and the Two Chinas: A Constructivist Foreign Policy Analysis," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* Vol 1, no. 2 (May 2009): 404, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ofs&AN=46815719&site=eds-live&scope=site> (accessed February 14, 2016).

¹⁰ DeHart, *Remodelling the Global Development Landscape: The China Model and South–South Cooperation in Latin America*, 1366.

“deprived the local economy of labor and material benefit...”¹¹ Additionally, an oversight function was needed ensuring Chinese workers were compliant with Costa Rican labor laws and environmental regulations. Conversely, this approach allows China to infuse an economic stimulus by the obvious employment opportunities for its own people via this project.

To close this section, Costa Rica’s approach is taking full advantage of the China Model as it defies the authoritarian nature of the Chinese approach. The *Ticos* (nickname for Costa Ricans) have remained true to their liberal democratic views. This pragmatism does come with risk, as China will, in turn, apply its own version of interest-driven economics. This will manifest itself through environmental challenges and labor and resource competition with the host Latin American nation. To be fair, the negative connotation of the China Model is a western concept. To analyze the flip-side of the argument, China’s South-South cooperation will be discussed in the next section.

South-South Cooperation

As stated previously, South-South cooperation is a counter-narrative that emphasizes China’s status as a developing nation with an incomplete domestic modernization effort. This viewpoint is relevant as Latin America emerges from decades of tumultuous political wrangling as a by-product of their post-colonial make-up. As such, China has positioned itself to be a donor to Latin American nations while still portraying itself as sympathetic to the common struggles of a developing nation.

Costa Rica’s recognition of the PRC put forth a rapid process of developing both commercial and diplomatic relations. The Chinese embassy opened in August 2007, two months after the formal declaration, and immediately set forth in establishing

¹¹ Ibid.

relationships with the business and social communities. “Marco Vinicio Ruiz, intimately involved in the process as Costa Rica’s minister of foreign trade, noted that the features of the new relationship that most impressed him were the directness and pragmatism with which the Chinese worked with their new Costa Rican counterparts...”¹²

Once appropriately positioned geopolitically, China embraced its donor status. Upon the PRC recognition, Taiwan withdrew millions of dollars to include \$15 million for an upgraded highway, \$2 million for equipment, \$3 million for unspecified goods and an unknown quantity earmarked for municipalities.¹³ Despite multi-lateral cooperation in loans and technical cooperation, the PRC provided a significant amount of new assistance. To negate the monetary loss from withdrawn Taiwanese grants, “an estimated \$220 million in potential donations and projects were promised or discussed during the negotiations preceding Costa Rican recognition of the PRC...”¹⁴

As part of this, and arguably the most visible example, is the \$73 million national stadium. So, in Costa Rica, South-South cooperation equates to a developing nation solidarity that behooves both nations. China has recognized that to attempt to impose its authoritarian policies would be detrimental. Costa Rica, in turn, publicly denounces China’s domestic transgressions, but takes advantage of development funding and China’s support for their bid on the United Nations’ Security Council.¹⁵

Using this example Costa Rica has built a tenuous relationship that befits their natural progression as they continue to develop. This is done by taking an advantageous stance as it pertains to China as a wealthy donor with a very lucrative market. This,

¹² Ellis, *China in Latin America: The Whats and Wherefores*, 216.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 217.

¹⁵ DeHart, *Remodelling the Global Development Landscape: The China Model and South–South Cooperation in Latin America*, 1367.

however, is resulting in ambivalence among the *Tico* populace as Costa Rica's democratic ideals grapple with China's view on labor and developmental practices. As seen in the next section, DeHart explores this situation through an ethnographic analysis leading to a cultural First-Third World hierarchical interpretation.

On the Ground—Cultural Aspects via Public Opinion

Monica DeHart uses the new Costa Rican national stadium as a platform by which to launch into a discourse about the *Tico* sentiment as it pertains to the Chinese. Her first-hand interviews show whether the China Model should be feared or the South-South cooperation should be embraced; nonetheless, ethnic and cultural differences will continue to exist. Although obvious, this statement runs deeper than mere physiological differences.

The Costa Rican newspaper, *La Nación*, published an article entitled “The Jewel of the New Century Arrives from Asia, signaling, “how this latest phase in Costa Rica's development was directly tied to its new partnership with China.”¹⁶ Indeed, the money utilized for the stadium construction was Chinese, but so was the material and labor pool. Interestingly, rhetoric existed on the profits lost because of the China Model, but more attention was paid to the laborers.

In DeHart's ethnographic research, there were many back-handed comments cited. In describing the stadium's construction, the presence of Chinese laborers was deemed acceptable and they were complimented for their industrious ways. In contrast, Costa Rican workers were mentioned negatively and referenced as *vagos* (lazy bums). “Corroborating this view, local media reports openly admired the incredible efficiency and industriousness of the Chinese workers. One reporter observed incredulously ‘The . .

¹⁶ Ibid., 1369.

. workers don't even stop their work during the daily tropical downpours that last for hours and continue from the end of April to November'''.¹⁷

DeHart, aptly so, tempers the views and expresses that they “cannot necessarily be taken at face value and have to be read in relation to a longer history of Chinese presence in Latin America.”¹⁸ She interviewed several prominent Chinese leaders in Costa Rica and “while several of these leaders described their own easy assimilation into Costa Rican culture, they often admitted to more subtle forms of cultural misunderstanding and racism underlying Chinese–Costa Rican relations.”¹⁹ These sentiments fortify a long-standing anti-Chinese sentiment in Latin America representing “Chinese migrants as part of a ‘pernicious’, ‘all-consuming’, and ‘wily’ race that was often resented as much for its members’ commercial success as for their cultural difference.”²⁰ Furthering the debate, a Hong Kong Native turned Costa Rica native felt most Ticos had little information about China saying, “Most Costa Ricans thought Chinese were poor; [that China was] a country without human rights, where people ate dogs.”²¹

In DeHart’s opinion, there is a dominant sentiment of a “patronizing appraisal of Chinese laborers, who are to be admired not because they represent First World know-how and efficiency, but rather the disciplined, compliant Third World worker of global capitalism.”²² However, Costa Rica has never felt that it is a Third World nation; rather,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1370.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 1371.

it perceives itself as a First World nation closely aligned with the United States.²³ This notion challenges the dangers associated with aligning with the Chinese.

Fearing the China Model and South-South cooperation constructs has merit considering the challenge it poses for the United States' concept of the Washington Consensus. "The Washington consensus...espouses private property rights, economic opening, financial reforms, macroeconomic stability, and political liberalization to promote economic growth."²⁴ Meanwhile, the China Model shows itself to be environmentally hazardous, does not utilize inherent labor and material resources in the host nation, and, in the long-term, is more advantageous to China while stemming development growth in the host nation. Nonetheless, Costa Rica counter-balanced these negatives with a pragmatic cooperation utilizing China's concept of a South-South relationship.

On the surface, this revelation confronts the position of the United States in the region. In the Costa Rica case study, Monica DeHart counters this uneasiness by illuminating the cultural sentiment as expressed by the *Ticos*. Whether cultural resistance permeates throughout the region will be the basis for exploration as the China Model, South-South cooperation, and cultural aspects via public opinion as organizing principles are further applied to Mexico in the next section.

²³ Ibid., 1371.

²⁴ Yasheng Huang, "Debating China's Economic Growth: The Beijing Consensus Or the Washington Consensus," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 24, no. 2 (05, 2010): 31, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=51827774&site=eds-live&scope=site> (accessed March 8, 2016).

Mexico

As a semi-industrialized, upper middle-income country whose economy has developed and diversified significantly over the past 30 years, Mexico can attribute a large portion of its success on an “ever-expanding network of free-trade agreements and broadly orthodox fiscal and monetary policies.”¹ Mexico coupled its pursuit of aggressive policies with a heavy emphasis on the maquila sector.

The maquiladoras (short for maquila plants) are manufacturing and assembly plants designed for product exportation. The maquiladoras are mostly located along a 20 km swath of territory on the U.S.-Mexico border. “The defining characteristic of maquiladoras is their exclusive focus on assembling imported intermediate inputs which are then exported either for further assembly or as finished goods, mostly to the U.S.”² Although the maquiladoras have been in existence since the 1960s, they started to boom in the 1980s when Mexico initiated its first round of trade and investment liberalization reforms.³

“One of the main goals of the maquiladora program was to increase employment of unskilled workers. As such, the maquiladoras’ share of GDP rose from 4.2% to 9.9% during the 1990s. This also led to over 130% increase in employment.”⁴ Given this data, the importance of the maquiladora sector to the Mexican economy becomes apparent.

¹ *Country Reports - Mexico* (: IHS Global Inc, 2015), 1, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=110719611&site=eds-live>, 16.

² Benedikt Heid, Mario Larch, and Alejandro Riaño, "The Rise of the Maquiladoras: A Mixed Blessing," *Review of Development Economics* Vol. 17, No. 2 (May 2013): 252, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=87042758&site=eds-live> (accessed December 30, 2015).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 262.

However, during the early 2000s, the industry suffered a “deep drop in labor employment and production, and in the subsequent years it has been exhibiting rather moderate rates of growth compared with the fast expansion of the 1990s.”⁵

The maquiladora experience explains the linkage to China’s congruent economic sector. “China has experienced an important expansion in the production and export of manufacturing goods, and, as a consequence, [has] become a negative factor for Mexican maquiladora growth.”⁶ To further the comparison, since 1978, when “China opened up its economy to foreign investment...its GDP has increased at an average rate of 10.4% during 1990-2005, this growth rate contrasts with the less accelerated growth of the Mexican GDP, for the same period, of 3.1%.”⁷ To encapsulate, “China’s industrial production has become a competitor for Mexican maquiladora exports, reducing activity, and diminishing the demand for labor.”⁸

The maquiladoras example assists in explaining a Chinese-Mexican relationship that is tenuous as “they are neither obvious allies, nor despite some substantial differences and potential conflicts, especially in economic relations, are they obvious enemies.”⁹ The degree of competition remains high as both nations depend on export manufacturing as large portions of their economy.¹⁰ Yet, there is a natural gravitation

⁵ Jorge Eduardo Mendoza, "The Effect of the Chinese Economy on Mexican Maquiladora Employment," *International Trade Journal* Vol. 24, No. 1 (January 2010): 53, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=47515275&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed December 30, 2016).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 56.

⁹ Beatriz Carrillo Garcia, Minglu Chen, and David S. G. Goodman, "Beyond Asymmetry: Cooperation, Conflict and Globalisation in Mexico-China Relations," *Pacific Review* Vol. 24, No. 4 (September 2011): 423, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=64459522&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed December 30, 2016).

¹⁰ Minglu Chen and David S. G. Goodman, "The China Model: One Country, Six Authors," *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 21, No. 73 (January 2012): 171,

towards one another as higher-end developing nations. As such, the Sino-Mexican link is extremely complicated and lends itself to further analysis via the China Model and South-South Comparison.

The China Model

Given the aforementioned maquiladora explanation, one would question why the two nations would enter into any agreement. The fact of the matter is the two countries see a necessity for their continued relationship. The relationship is even more peculiar when considering the forms of government. Mexico, as a burgeoning democracy that buckles to political will, collaborates with the authoritarian Chinese government.

As is the case with Costa Rica, Mexico's partnership with China leads to fears as to whether liberal democracies and western values are at risk. These concerns are shown to be quickly tempered through the study of a failed binational initiative to establish Mexico's first high-speed rail line. "(T)he cases of the revoked tender for the high-speed railway in November 2014...show(s) that problems with governance may have a direct negative impact on Chinese investment in Mexico."¹¹

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto announced at the start of his term in 2012 that his government would promote several projects for rail line infrastructure to help boost economy and improve communication. On November 3, 2014, the China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) and a handful of Mexican construction firms won the bid to build Mexico's first high-speed train project. The 50.8 billion-pesos (\$3.7 billion) project would involve building a bullet train line to connect the national capital of

<https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=67750595&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed December 28, 2015).

¹¹ *Mexico Economy: Relations with China Remain Positive Despite Setbacks* (New York, United Kingdom, New York: The Economist Intelligence Unit N.A., Incorporated, 2015), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1660802009?accountid=12686> (accessed December 30, 2015).

Mexico City with the growing industrial hub of Queretaro in the north by 2017. Upon completion, the bullet train service would cut travel time from about two and a half hours to less than one hour, with trains traveling at a maximum speed of 300 kilometers per hour.¹²

Everybody in China was happy to hear the news in the first place, but later disappointed when Mexico abruptly revoked the tender that was expected to be given to the Chinese Company. The explanation given by the Mexican side was that President Peña Nieto wanted to avoid “any doubts about the legitimacy and transparency” of the bidding process.¹³ The Mexican government insisted on a contract that could not be doubted by its constituency and legislators.¹⁴

Mexico is sensitive to the authoritative politics China infuses into their economic initiatives. In fact, Mexico’s decision to cancel the CRCC is considered brazen as it occurred less than two weeks before a Mexican state visit to China. “By scrapping the CRCC deal before a state visit, Mexico’s Peña Nieto sends a strong message that we are not asking for any favors from China,” Mexico’s former ambassador to China, Jorge Guajadaro, wrote on Twitter. “Chinese (state-owned enterprises) are used today as they wish in some African countries, Venezuela, and other developing countries. Mexico is different.”¹⁵

Despite the façade of a Chinese power play, the fact is CRCC led a consortium that did include Mexican businesspersons. “Media reports revealed that the Chinese

¹² Shixue Jiang, "China's New Leadership and the New Development of China-Latin America Relations," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* Vol. 1, No. 01 (2015), 150-151.

¹³ Ibid., 151.

¹⁴ He Jun, "Why China's Bullet Train Deal with Mexico Went Off the Rails" www.english.caixin.com/d014-11-11/100749541.html (accessed January 2, 2016)

¹⁵ Ibid.

company was indeed the victim of an internal Mexican political struggle. The opposition claimed that Ingenieria Inmobiliaria del Centro, a firm owned by Grupo Higa, which is associated with (CRCC) that won the contract, owns a \$7 million mansion occupied by the presidential family.”¹⁶

Whether CRCC is to blame or if a Mexican internal political clash occurred, the fact remains that Mexico acted as a liberal democracy despite significant pressure from China. Despite the interpretation of why Mexico cancelled the transaction, it upheld democratic traditions as it proceeded either because of a lack of government transparency or because of constituency displeasure based on political improprieties. As was the case with Costa Rica, Mexico is defying the China Model. Rather than succumb to the Chinese attempt to sway them economically with the high-speed railway, Mexico stayed true to their liberal democratic values.

South-South Cooperation

Mexico and China share a complex South-South cooperative relationship. Despite the CRCC calamity and the natural economic competition, the international political relationship between PRC and Mexico has been remarkably positive. “Mexico is one of the PRC’s designated ‘strategic partners—the highest level of importance for an international relation, and not one shared for example with China and Cuba.’”¹⁷

In a 2013 visit, President Xi upgraded the Sino-Mexican relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership. “This upgraded bilateral relationship was accompanied with efforts to increase economic cooperation—including investment and

¹⁶ Jiang, *China's New Leadership and the New Development of China-Latin America Relations*, 151.

¹⁷ Garcia, Chen, and Goodman, *Beyond Asymmetry: Cooperation, Conflict and Globalisation in Mexico-China Relations*, 425.

trade—in sectors like agriculture, energy, finance, infrastructure, mining, and tourism.”¹⁸ Shortly thereafter, the Mexican government announced that CRCC would be compensated \$1.3 million.¹⁹ Whether Mexico did this to show good faith is not clear, but the inference is logical.

To further complicate the relationship, of the five Latin American countries that have signed a “strategic partnership” agreement with China—Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico, and Venezuela—Mexico received the least amount of FDI. Research indicates that in the 2010-2011 timeframe, Mexico received \$200 million from China. The second least amount went to Chile for \$1.5 billion.²⁰ Needless to say, quite the disparity.

Although there is an attempt to stoke the fires of South-South cooperation, “Mexico competes with, rather than complements China’s rise. It provides few natural resources to the Asian behemoth, and its own factories have faced the threat of low-cost Chinese production.”²¹ As such, Mexico’s trade with China is far less dependent on agricultural products or even its large oil reserves. Instead, “China exports large quantities of manufactured goods to Mexico as well as parts and intermediate goods to be processed in Mexico for exportation to the U.S. market.”²²

This has led to a trade imbalance in favor of China. “Depending on the source of statistics, either 78.2 (China) or 94 percent (Mexico) of the two-way trade between the

¹⁸ Alvin Cheng-Hin Lem, *Latin America and China's 'New Normal'-Analysis*, www.eurasiareview.com/28052015-latin-america-and-china-new-normal-analysis (2015) (accessed January 2, 2016).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Hongying Wang, “The Missing Link in Sino–Latin American Relations,” *Journal of Contemporary China* Vol. 24, No. 95 (March 2009): 922, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1013380> (accessed September 10, 2015).

²¹ Shannon K. O’Neil, “Mexico,” *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 93, No. 1 (January 2014): 11, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=buh&AN=93322510&site=eds-live> (accessed December 15, 2015).

²² Wang, *The Missing Link in Sino–Latin American Relations*, 930.

two countries is the result of China's export to Mexico. China's investment in Mexico is also substantially larger than Mexico's in China. (D)ifference is about 3:1, though other sources suggest it is substantially larger."²³

Even more surprising, given the different forms of government the respective nations practice, is that Mexico's voting practices in the United Nations General Assembly is very similar. To put in context, China and Mexico "worked closely together in their opposition to the U.S. led invasion of Iraq."²⁴ In 2002, Mexico was elected to the UN Security Council just as the U.S. was preparing to invade Iraq.

The Mexican Ambassador, Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, was outspoken in resisting the various requests by the USA for support. The government of the USA retaliated with criticism of Mexico's role in eliciting support from the PRC for the former's position on Iraq. While the view that Mexico was leading China on this issue might have been equally insulting to both those countries, there is no doubt that the two governments exchanged views in some detail before and during the Security Council's discussion of USA-Iraq relations.²⁵

To confuse matters further, Mexico has maintained consistent support for the "One China Policy" while still holding unofficial diplomatic and economic relations with the Taiwan-based regime. In addition, UN voting records indicate,

Mexico has never criticized China's human rights record. In contrast to its criticisms of Cuba, it abstains when votes are taken on the state of human rights in the PRC. Even more remarkable has been the consistent record of concerted action by the governments of the PRC and Mexico in the United Nations. An analysis of their voting behavior demonstrates that Mexico voted with China more than any state other than Cuba.²⁶

²³ Garcia, Chen, and Goodman, *Beyond Asymmetry: Cooperation, Conflict and Globalisation in Mexico-China Relations*, 423.

²⁴ Ibid., 425.

²⁵ Ibid., 427-428.

²⁶ Ibid., 427.

Analysis consistently shows that “China has three main interests in Mexico: natural resources (mostly mining), closeness to the U.S. market, and Mexican demand for consumer goods. Its national interests are to ensure steady bilateral diplomatic relations and avoid taking any measures that would impede the flow of Chinese goods into Mexico.”²⁷ These interests and the increased Chinese “presence in Mexico has provoked different emotions...”²⁸ The Chinese economic strength and the asymmetric advantage it holds over Mexico clearly defines the opinions and visions of the local Mexican populace.

Cultural Aspects via Public Opinion

At the highest levels of government, Mexican and Chinese officials are attempting to build a better spirit of cooperation. On June 5, 2013, President Xi Jinping addressed Mexico’s congress and spoke to the aspect of their relationship that is most lacking—culture. He said, “(t)he two sides should expand exchanges in the fields of culture, education, sport, media, and tourism, to make China-Mexico friendship more deeply rooted in the hearts of both peoples. We should strengthen exchanges between the young generation to carry forward China-Mexico friendship from generation-to-generation.”²⁹

²⁷ Romer Cornejo, Francisco Javier Haro Navejas, and José Luis León-Manríquez, "Trade Issues and Beyond: Mexican Perceptions on Contemporary China," *Latin American Policy* Vol. 4, No. 1 (June 2013): 59, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edb&AN=87391573&site=eds-live> (accessed December 15, 2015).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ "President Xi Jinping Delivers Speech at Mexico Congress of Union on China-Mexico, China-Latin America Relations Promote Common Development, Work Together for Bright Future," *States News Service* (2013), http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/bic1/NewsDetailsPage/NewsDetailsWindow?failOverType=&query=&prodId=BIC1&windowstate=normal&contentModules=&display-query=&mode=view&displayGroupName=News&limiter=&currPage=&disableHighlighting=false&displayGroups=&sortBy=&search_within_results=&p=BIC1&action=e&catId=&activityType=&scanId=&documentId=GALE%7CA333815164&source=Bookmark&u=wash60683&jsid=5f456643cc737b1361aba835494a6ab3..

A day later, at President Peña Nieto's invitation, President Xi Jinping visited Mexico's ancient Mayan ruins, Chichen Itza, "to promote the cultural exchanges between the two ancient civilizations of China and Mexico. Amongst the expected cultural exhibition of singing of folk songs and children waving flags from both countries, both presidents continued their dialogue on the importance of their respective ancient civilizations on their current cultures."³⁰ China's States News Service also reports that President Xi Jinping commented on how,

(d)ifferent cultures and civilizations, while retaining their uniqueness, should be open-minded, tolerant, and coexist in peace with each other, thus to achieve common development and prosperity. The two cultures of China and Mexico should take nourishment through exchanges and learning from each other growing vigorously as time goes by. The two sides should strengthen people-to-people contact to lay a more solid foundation for the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and Mexico.³¹

President Peña Nieto responded by saying, "the Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza has witnessed the friendship between Mexico and China today. President Xi Jinping's visit will certainly promote the Chinese people's understanding of the Mexican culture and advance the cultural and educational exchanges between the two countries."³²

The above interactions are an attempt by the Chinese and Mexican presidencies to close an increasingly growing gap between the nations. As emerging powers, these two nations should be exhibiting far more cooperation in a multipolar world. However,

³⁰ *Xi Jinping Visits Ancient Mayan Ruins of Chichen Itza Accompanied by President Pena Nieto Calling on China and Mexico to Take Cultural Nourishment from each Other*: States News Service (2013), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgbc&AN=edsgcl.333815158&site=eds-live>

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid.

Mexican perceptions are inhibiting cooperation and may be leading to further competition.³³

The ethnographic research is quite limited as “China is not usually one of the main concerns in the design of opinion polls in Mexico.”³⁴ The data that exists is complicated resulting in various interpretations of Mexican perceptions toward China. This is not surprising given the complexity of the relationship in its entirety.

The print media, not necessarily classified as sensationalist, capture the imagination and sway opinion with the following headlines as examples:

China “Swallows” The Mexican Market (2003)
Common Front Against China, Demands Derbez (2003)
Manufactures, Increasingly Fragile; China, a Threat (2005)
Chinese Command Attacks to Evacuate Town (2005)
Mexico at War Against China in the WTO (2005)
China Hits Markets (2005)
The Dragon Monopolizes (2005)
Chinese Pirates Invade Chiapas (2005)
Chinese Motorbikes Invade Mexico (2006)
Chinese Attack the Peso (2009)
*China Threatens National Security (2012)*³⁵

In addition, there have been instances of tangible actions against Chinese individuals in Mexico. For example, in Monterrey, authorities detained 31 Chinese engineers after artisans accused them of stealing their designs.³⁶ Additionally, in the municipality of Zautla, located in the state of Puebla, local inhabitants forced the closure of a Chinese mine by blocking the only access to the mine. Reports indicate protestors had environmental concerns. As such, they waved signs with said concerns mixed with

³³ Cornejo, Haro Navejas, and León-Manríquez, *Trade Issues and Beyond: Mexican Perceptions on Contemporary China*, 57.

³⁴ Ibid., 68.

³⁵ Ibid., 63.

³⁶ “Detienen a 31 Chinos Porque Pensaban Que Espiaban Para Copiarles,” *La Nación*, June 4, 2006.

xenophobic statements. This action forced eight Chinese employees to flee the local town.³⁷

While these incidents are indicative of cultural clashes, some polling data suggests there is an affinity for the Chinese.

In 2006, 47% of the respondents saw a threat in the rise of China as a world power. Two years later, on the eve of the Olympic Games, this percentage decreased to 32%. In 2006, 36% saw it as a negative trend that China's economy was catching up with that of the United States, but a similar proportion (33%) perceived this as positive; in 2010, positive opinions about the growth of the Chinese economy reached 40%, whereas negative ones remained at 37%.³⁸

Based on perceptions by the Mexican elite, the following data was derived from surveying top businesspeople, politicians, and scholars.

In 2006, 67% of that group said that Chinese economic strength was positive, but such favorable opinion fell to 59% in 2010. In 2006, Mexicans had a favorable opinion of China as a country and gave it a high grade, fifth place, with 66 points, behind Canada (75), the United States (74), Australia (69), and Japan (68). In the 2010 poll, China was in sixth place, with 62 points. Despite this slight deterioration of China's image, 76% of the respondents said that Asian countries were more an “opportunity” than a “threat” to Mexico.³⁹

The disparity in data is to be expected. In the examples provided above dealing with social strife, the portion of the population most negatively impacted by a Chinese presence responded most aggressively. Additionally, the segment of the population in a position to benefit most by Chinese influence, naturally responded positively when asked about China.

³⁷ Mónica Camacho, "Trabajadores De JDC Minerales Abandonan Proyecto Minero En Zautla" www.lajornadadeorientemexico.com.mx/noticia/puebla/trabajadores-de-jdc-minerales-abandonan-proyecto-minero-en-zautla_id_16794.html (accessed January 4, 2016).

³⁸ Cornejo, Haro Navejas, and León-Manríquez, *Trade Issues and Beyond: Mexican Perceptions on Contemporary China*, 69.

³⁹ Ibid.

Whether public opinion is based on economics or cultural biases is debatable. What stands the test, however, is the reality that Mexico is acutely aware of cultural perceptions. As such, the U.S., China, and Mexico must consider these factors when engaging with one another on a global scale.

Summary of Results

Only applying Costa Rica and Mexico to the model provides a limited sample for an entire geographical region consisting of 33 states¹, but the necessary research to construct this monograph provided enough exposure to provide general regional observations. Although some may be obvious, they bear mentioning given that policy makers seem to ignore them. The research has netted an understanding that Latin American nations are politically mature states seeking their own political agendas while China is attempting to close a cultural difference that exists.

The post-Cold War environment resulted in a complacent U.S. foreign policy within its own hemisphere. The U.S. found itself as arguably the global, but certainly, the regional, hegemon as the Soviet Union crumbled. This realization and other worldwide events allowed the United States to focus energy and emphasis anywhere but Latin America.

During this time, the Chinese government made substantial overhauls to its economic system. This coupled with political reform led to its acceptance into the World Trade Organization in 2001.² As a moment of foreshadowing, Mexico was one of the last countries to accept PRC into the organization.

This openness led to a voracious appetite for raw materials and consumables to sustain its growing economy and population. The developing world provided the necessary resources, so China leveraged cooperation along the South-South model. In

¹ Jaewoo Choo, "China's Relations with Latin America: Issues, Policy, Strategies, and Implications," *Journal of International & Area Studies* Vol. 16, No. 2 (December 2009):77, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=53548053&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (Accessed September 10, 2015).

² Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World : The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*: New York : Penguin Books, 2012), 180-181.

the meantime, Beijing created a “distinctive state-directed yet marketized model that maintained key elements of self-control,”³ or autocracy.

In researching material for this thesis, it became clear that this dichotic philosophy allows for an “exit option”⁴ for developing nations whose political leadership does not subscribe to liberal, free-market economies in the purest sense.⁵ That said, only the leftist nations of the Bolivian revolution have followed China’s path. Venezuela, by way of example, did so to disastrous results.⁶ Conversely, the democratic nations like those used in this thesis are careful not to step on liberal values. As mature democracies, their constituency and their belief systems, to include culture, heavily influence the political apparatus.

Many of the articles and books reviewed mention the PRC’s attempt to close the cultural gap. In a 2007 report to the Seventeenth Party Congress, former President Hu Jintao said, “[i]n the present era, culture has become a...factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength...We must...enhance culture as part of the soft power of our country.”⁷ The reason is clear. China operates in a cultural deficit.

Naturally, culture and the effect on a person, let alone an entire nation, is based on perception. A Mexican worker in a maquiladora who lost their job to a Chinese-led

³ Andrew J. Nathan and Andrew Scobell, "Globalization as a Security Strategy: Power and Vulnerability in the 'China Model'," *Political Science Quarterly* (Wiley-Blackwell) Vol. 128, no. 3 (Fall 2013):433, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=90064970&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed September 10, 2015).

⁴ Andrew Coleman and Jackson Nyamuya Maogoto, "'Westphalian' Meets 'Eastphalian' Sovereignty: China in a Globalized World," *Asian Journal of International Law* Vol. 3, no. 2 (July 2013): 265, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=99007028&site=eds-live&scope=site> (accessed December 16, 2015).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Robert Evan Ellis and Army War College (U.S.). Strategic Studies Institute., *China-Latin America Military Engagement : Good Will, Good Business, and Strategic Position*: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2011), 108.

⁷ NATHAN and SCOBELL, *Globalization as a Security Strategy: Power and Vulnerability in the 'China Model'*, 440.

consortium will have a different opinion than a Tico who helped engineer a Chinese-built national stadium. However, speaking generally of China's programs to enhance its economic and political influence in Latin America, "China's greatest strategic threat today is its national image."⁸

⁸ Cornejo, Haro Navejas, and León-Manríquez, *Trade Issues and Beyond: Mexican Perceptions on Contemporary China*, 69.

Recommendations

It is not surprising that a perception of neglect associated with U.S. foreign relations with Latin America since the end of the Cold War, and particularly since the events of 9/11, exists. Events occurring in the Middle East have consumed Washington's focus. Some believe this led to a "power vacuum...facilitating the emergence of China as a vigorous actor in Latin America."¹ Even so, policy makers must determine what degree of risk to U.S. national interests this condition poses. While considering the risk, a strategic formula must take a pragmatic approach towards shaping the triangular relationship because of global interdependence.

Containment is not an option as China's economy has permeated throughout all of Latin America.² In order to shape the environment, the U.S. foreign policy must revolve around continued discussions with China specifically on Latin America. Additionally, as China continues to spread their culture as a means of foreign policy, the United States must enhance educational opportunities for *Latinos* in America's universities to expose and highlight cultural similarities of the western hemisphere residents. Related to educational opportunities, the United States must make a concerted effort in training and educating *Latinos* in technical and scientific fields so there is less reliance on their traditionally raw material and mercantilist economy.

In April 2006, Thomas Shannon, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere issues visited China with a singly-focused goal of dialoguing about Latin

¹ JOSE LEÓN-MANRÍQUEZ and LUIS F. ALVAREZ, "Mao's Steps in Monroe's Backyard: Towards a United States-China Hegemonic Struggle in Latin America?" *Revista Brasileira De Política Internacional* Vol. 57 (January 2014): 14, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=98798956&site=eds-live&scope=site> (accessed December 16, 2015).

² NATHAN and SCOBELL, *Globalization as a Security Strategy: Power and Vulnerability in the 'China Model'*, 436.

America.³ Since this historic visit, Sino-U.S. dialogues on Latin American issues have continued through President Obama's administration. These bilateral discussions must become a matter of policy and continue with frequency. As important, are the measures that must be taken to ensure Latin American nations perceive the dialogue to be transparent and in the best interest of all nations.⁴

China's presence in Latin America is visible and is disconcerting to some in the U.S. policy-making community because of the lack of clarity about Chinese motivations. Despite a vocal strategic communication that professes a peaceful rise, a second part of the messaging offers China's own system to developing countries in Latin America as a model to combat poverty.⁵ By offering their structure for economic development, China has allowed a perception of hegemonic challenge that is the nexus of U.S. concern.

To further dampen perceived nefarious intentions, China's strategic communication continues to stress they have learned from "(t)he rise and fall of some big powers..." that "...(e)xpansionism leads to nowhere; arms race leads to nowhere; seeking world domination leads to nowhere."⁶ Furthermore, "...Deng Xiaoping once said, if one day China tries to seek hegemony in the world, people of the world should expose, oppose, and overthrow it."⁷

Despite these statements, the Chinese are competitive with the U.S. for the following pragmatic reasons:

³ LEÓN-MANRÍQUEZ and ALVAREZ, *Mao's Steps in Monroe's Backyard: Towards a United States-China Hegemonic Struggle in Latin America?*, 21.

⁴ Gonzalo Sebastián Paz, "China, United States and Hegemonic Challenge in Latin America: An Overview and some Lessons from Previous Instances of Hegemonic Challenge in the Region," *The China Quarterly* No. 209 (2012), 24.

⁵ Evgeny Pashentsev, "The Strategic Communication of Russia, China and the USA in Latin America: War Or Peace?" *Academic Conferences International Limited* (Jul 2013): 212, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1400694899?accountid=12686> (accessed December 16, 2016).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

- the rate of economic development of China is higher than that of the U.S.
- the population of China is four times larger than that of the U.S.
- China is still perceived as a developing country and can be likened to a former colony. These ideas provide for a shared bond with Latin American countries.
- Chinese diasporas in Latin America are growing faster than U.S. contingents and are entering political and economic structures within the region
- China has the potential for informational and cultural influence in the region⁸

To that end, ambiguity does exist, especially with the last stated point. China's rapid economic development is starting to slow (although, it will still out-pace that of the U.S.), it lacks an abundance of raw material, competition exists with Latin American producers, a large scientific and innovation deficit continues to exist, and there are still unresolved social problems in its authoritarian regime. These clearly become China's disadvantages, in particular, as they pertain to informational and cultural influence.

Therefore, China's disadvantages should be advantages for the United States.

Among them are:

- geographical proximity
- a similar history based on gaining freedom from European powers
- global economic, military, and scientific superiority
- predominance of trade, economic, military, scientific, and educational relations with most Latin American nations
- the predominance of U.S. mass culture in the Latin American public conscience⁹

A comprehensive cultural approach must be included in any future Latin American policy. This recommendation is not meant to erase any Chinese cultural context, but to fortify, as previously mentioned, a U.S. advantage versus a Chinese disadvantage. What policy constructionists must remember is the People's Republic of

⁸ Ibid., 213.

⁹ Ibid., 214.

China may be economically formidable, but it is still an autocratic regime concerned with internal security.

Between 1978 and 2003, China dispatched more than 700,000 students to study at institutions of higher education abroad, mostly in the United States, in an effort to rapidly acquire advanced technology.”¹⁰ The result was that fewer than 25 percent of these individuals returned to China. Those who returned did so with western values that contradicted “China’s official ideology.”¹¹

To counter the perceived ill-effects of the China brand, 190 PRC-sponsored Confucius Institutes operate in 57 countries with five located in Mexico.¹² These institutes profess “Confucian principles such as long-term cooperation, ordered harmony, and respect for the autonomy of others reflect the geopolitical conditions that the Chinese government considers necessary for global peace and prosperity, as expressed in its foreign policy.”¹³

Essentially, the Chinese government is educating the masses in their way of life through its version of the teachings of Confucius. This attempt at sharing their culture is coupled with additional educational exchanges. The United States must increase educational benefits to Latin Americans while populating regional universities with American students. As a matter of culture, the U.S. enjoys the luxury of having some of the preeminent universities in the world. The U.S. needs to leverage this advantage as a matter of foreign policy.

¹⁰ NATHAN and SCOBELL, *Globalization as a Security Strategy: Power and Vulnerability in the 'China Model'*, 431.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Adrian Hearn, "China and Latin America: Economy and Society," *Latin American Policy* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2013), 32.

¹³ Ibid..

When inviting *Latinos* to U.S. universities, it is imperative they study technical and scientific subjects. The region “consistently trails other regions...in the quality and availability of their infrastructure, in research and development spending, and in the number of available skilled workers.”¹⁴ As the Mexico case study has shown, “the region’s prospects for moving inwards from the periphery of the global market lie in less dependence on resource exports and more attention to educational and technical advancement. Chinese investment in Latin American resources may bring rapid economic growth but does not in itself provide a long-term, sustainable platform for development.”¹⁵

Latin Americans have grown accustomed to foreign-managed manufacturing operations, industrial parks, and resource extraction projects that have too often failed to build local technical capacities or create opportunities for domestic businesses. It is no coincidence that, according to *Latinobarometro*, 63% of Latin Americans oppose the privatization of their energy resources. Concerns about unfair commercial competition, and dissatisfaction with labor conditions, wages, industrial insulation, and the practice of bringing in workers from mainland China to replace the local workforce have surfaced in Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, and Chile.¹⁶

As stated previously, this leads to cultural tensions. This provides an opportunity for U.S. policy makers to affect the region by not merely consuming traditional products, but providing technical assistance to a cultural ally. This approach will lessen the impact of a Chinese economic downturn consistent with current events. This ensures a Latin America that is not dependent on the U.S. or Chinese economies exclusively, but a triangular partnership with equal benefits to all.

¹⁴ *The Visible Hand of China in Latin America*, ed. org.sourceoecd.content.MultiLingualContentItemAdaptor@451d91dePB Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2007), 125.

¹⁵ Hearn, *China and Latin America: Economy and Society*, 28.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

In summary, U.S. foreign policy must revolve around multilateral discussions. The on-going Sino-U.S. dialogue must continue with full transparency so Latin American nations are engaged partners. Additionally, as China continues to stretch its cultural fabric into Latin America via educational avenues, the United States must remain on par with their efforts, at a minimum. Finally, related to educational opportunities, foreign policy initiatives must ensure Latin American students who access America's universities study technical and scientific subjects to move the region forward. A by-product to this approach is continued exposure to American culture that Latin American still see as appealing.

Conclusion

Now is the time for the United States to continue increased emphasis in Latin America. According to a 2013 Latinobarómetro poll, an average of 69 percent of Latin American respondents have a favorable opinion of the United States, an increase of 11 percentage points from 2008.¹ This may be partly attributed to new initiatives to assist Central American governments battle drug-infused crimes, taking a more proactive approach in negotiations to resolve Colombia's decades long struggle with the FARC guerrillas, shifting focus from drug interdiction and recognizing U.S. demand as part of the problem; and, at a minimum, a willingness to reform immigration policy.

The above-mentioned does not equate to a panacea, but it does translate nicely into a framework which the next administration should use as a foundation for future Latin American relations. This approach will net results only through enhanced multilateralism. The U.S. must also construct policies through a lens that realizes Latin America is a complex entity of nations that are "largely democratic, increasingly more prosperous, and more self-confident than ever"² that will act pragmatically in their own self-interests.

Whether one subscribes to the China Model or South-South cooperation as a basis for Chinese influence, the fact remains that China has ensured the U.S. will not be blindly followed by Latin America. The economic benefits the region enjoyed are undeniable through "(t)he Chinese-fueled commodity boom, which only ended recently..."³

¹ Michael Reid, "Obama and Latin America," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 94, No. 5 (September 2015): 52, <https://nduezproxy.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=109120829&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed January 2, 2016).

² Ibid., 45.

³ Ibid., 47.

Although, in most polling sources, the United States maintains a relatively high opinion rating, this varies depending on the sector of society in which one belongs. However, what is consistent is the cultural linkage between the United States and Latin America. Arguably, this is what has kept the U.S. viable in the region. There are 57 million *Latinos* residing in the United States who “retain family connections south of the border.”⁴

As stated earlier, and attributed to Howard Wiarda, culture is often ignored in foreign policy. Presidential-hopeful Donald Trump successfully disaffected a large U.S. demographic when he stated “(t)hey (referring to Mexican immigrants) are bringing drugs. They are bringing crime. They’re rapists, some, I assume, are good people.”⁵ This example is not designed to advocate a single political platform, but to highlight the danger in alienating a Latin American nation through cultural insensitivities. As expected, various segments of Mexican society negatively commented on Trump’s remarks, to include former Mexican President Felipe Calderón.

What the above example does highlight is a continued cultural neglect in international relations. United States policy makers would be wise to remember that the Chinese now have a strong influence in the region, and the single greatest advantage the U.S enjoys in Latin America is the cultural similarities. Policies must consider this and use culture as an avenue for policy development.

⁴ Ibid., 46.

⁵ Azam Ahmed, *And Now, what Mexico Thinks of Donald Trump*, The New York Times Company (2015), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgbc&AN=edsgcl.420300627&site=eds-live>

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